

Jenny Barnett

25 August 1947 – 7 February 2009

Jenny Barnett, with her husband John, was tragically killed at their Steels Creek home during the fires in February 2009. Jenny was well known as a conservationist through her work at the Victorian National Parks Association, as a naturalist with interests in insects and orchids, and through her involvement with the Mammal Survey Group. Several organisations have published tributes to Jenny outlining these interests. The following tribute records Jenny's earliest forays into natural history, as a member, initially, of the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalists (later the Junior Field Naturalists of the FNCV).

Jenny Barnett (née Forse) first joined the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalists Club as an adolescent in September 1964. Like many other junior naturalists from this era, she became associated with the Field Naturalists Club via the Nature Show that was held annually in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall in August/September. She was fortunate to live close to other active members of the Hawthorn Juniors, Gary Wallis and Frank Moore, which facilitated her attendance at activities. Very quickly, Jenny became recognised as a competent entomologist, initially specialising in butterflies. She became prominent on excursions, carrying a butterfly net and developing productive friendships with FNCV members such as Bob Condrón, who shared similar interests. Her early exhibits at the Hawthorn Juniors were dominated by butterflies and moths from tropical Australia and overseas, as well as local species.

Jenny's infectious enthusiasm, dedication and maturity meant that she was targeted early to become a member of the Junior Council of the Hawthorn Juniors in July 1965. There she was much appreciated for her good humour and calm judgement; these were admirable qualities for the position of Treasurer, which she held from June 1967 until May 1971. During this period, Jenny was recognised as one of a small group of senior young naturalists that the



A recent photograph of Jenny Barnett.

FNCV was keen to nurture, with the result that she was often asked to chair the general meetings of the Hawthorn Juniors, which at that time were attended by more than 100 children with their parents.

Probably the most conspicuous contributions of Jenny Forse in her formative years with the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalists were her Nature Show contributions. Within the FNCV Jenny was a pioneer in promoting the technique of preserving insects in plastic resin, demonstrating this technique first at meetings of the Hawthorn Juniors and then at the Nature Show in August 1968. Her interest in techniques that enhance the display and assist the study of natural history specimens was also demonstrated the following year at the 1969 Nature Show with her exhibition entitled 'X-Ray Animals' a demonstration of the use of alizarin red to make transparent the body of small dead



Jenny Forse and Barry Cooper pictured with other members of the FNCV Juniors at birthday celebrations in 1969.

animals such as lizards, and thus facilitate the easy study of their fully articulated skeletons.

By this time Jenny's natural history interests had led to university and to fully focused studies, then research in zoology at Monash University. Jenny completed an MSc on the ecology of an undescribed species of bullant (now known as *Myrmecia* sp. 17 and listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*). In 1971 she was a founding member of the Mammal Survey Group of Victoria, and played an important role in the New Holland Mouse Recovery Program. Jenny was an active staff member of the Victorian National Parks Association,

involved in many of their environmental campaigns. She co-authored a book, *Standing up for your environment*, which became the standard reference for all concerned about similar planning policies across Victoria.

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